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THE SCHOOL CAMERA.¹

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It is difficult to realize what conveniences and necessities we owe to the photographic art. In the home photo reproductions adorn the walls and bring in the distant world of history, geography, and art. The modern newspaper and magazine would be seriously hampered without the aid of the camera, with its wealth of material and realistic illustrations brought within our reach by the inexpensive and rapid methods of reproduction. In the commercial world also it is indispensable, reducing the cost of manufacturing in so many ways; and still more necessary is it in the scientific world, from the astronomer discovering invisible stars with the photographic plate, to the microscopist recording bacterial life upon the slide. We may well stop to ask now whether we are taking advantage of the many opportunities which this pictorial art offers to increase our efficiency by appealing to the visual sense and recording for mutual benefit, the school work.

For several years this school has tried to build up a collection of school photographs to show some of the phases of school life, and at the same time to have the pupils' interest in photography fostered and directed. It is the aim of this paper to give some results of our experience.

As a record of school life we have found the camera to reach into every nook and corner of real activity. Indoors the opportunities are innumerable to catch bits of life in the classroom, at the bench or forge, in the laboratory, kitchen, and studio. Social events—class parties, festivals, and assemblies—have not been neglected; for in this way they may be shared with many who cannot otherwise participate in them, and the prints do

¹ Photographs by the author; all rights reserved.

serve as mementoes of these happy events which are highly prized by the pupils.

Out of doors the necessity becomes even more imperative that we preserve some record of this side of school life. We succeed in keeping in this permanent form some part of the joyous contact with Mother Nature. The record of the progress of the garden products through the several stages is of great value to other classes, as are also the methods of carrying on the work through the passing seasons. The life and environment of many products of the soil may thus be clearly followed.

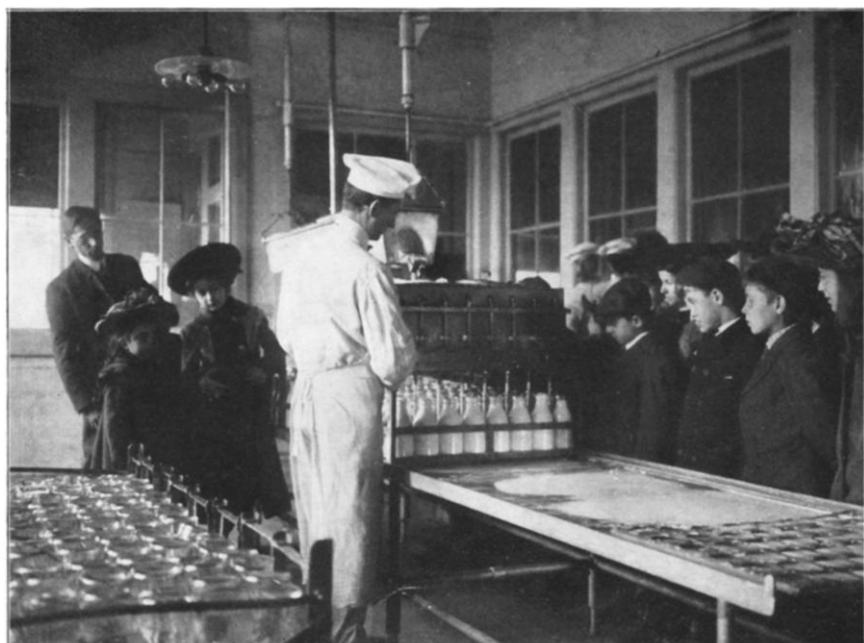
The value of bringing back from an excursion views of points visited and regions explored for nature-study, geography, and history is not realized fully until actually tried. This is of great assistance to both teacher and pupils in selecting the salient features of the trip; the central thought is emphasized and the relative values are brought out, thus teaching the selection of fundamentals which is so difficult and so vital to the work. Natural-history material which cannot be brought back to the schoolroom may be in the form of the photograph, and a continuous study of a tree, a rock, etc., through the seasons is made possible. In this way we have found many ways of illustrating the environment of different plants, and the results of wind, shade, crowding, etc. Evidences of physiographic activities are brought in showing the structure of the Palisades, the character of rocks disturbed by this intrusion, the crumpled layers of ancient rocks on Manhattan Island, etc. Changes now going on may also be recorded, showing the forward movement of a sand-dune from year to year, the encroachment of swamp on water area in a pond, and changes in a brook valley after a storm.

On industrial trips to the dairy-farm, the potter, the miller, etc., the camera has helped us to follow the steps of the different processes after the observation, which often has been hurried, has gone by.

Perhaps the greatest value of the school photograph as a record has been in giving to parents, visitors, teachers, and others interested in the school a brief but comprehensive view of the school activities which otherwise would not be preserved.



NATURE STUDY ON THE PALISADES



BOTTLING MILK AT THE DAIRY

It is a great problem to a visitor who has only a few hours to spend with us, to know how to begin and where to turn. A brief examination of a well-selected and representative collection of photographs will give a bird's-eye view, and then the visitor may select the lines with which he wishes to become familiar. At the annual school exhibit the photographs taken during the year have become quite indispensable as reinforcing and varying the written explanation, just as they have become so necessary in magazines and books. Here also the visitor's time is limited, and we strive to give him in condensed and attractive form what has been going on through all the year.

As a record of the past history of the school, the school collection is also valuable, showing past conditions, changes, and growth. From the standpoint of pupils' participation, the camera is a great help. In the kindergarten and lower grades the pupils make its beginning use of the photographic process in the blue-prints which are made of leaves, ferns, grains, pressed flowers, etc.,—an inexpensive and inexhaustible source of enjoyment and value. They make frames for these, and for the photographs of their school pets, to use for Christmas and birthday gifts. After a while they realize that impressions of their excursions are often fleeting, and thus learn the value of the photograph to refresh the memory during the review that follows the trip—that it is a record for future use, and, best of all, that it enables them to share with other pupils and other grades, that have not participated, the enjoyments and benefits of these experiences. When this sharing is more fully realized, it is possible for a grade to get many of these excursions by proxy, which of course greatly increases the value of the camera to the grade that finds the necessity to reorganize the essential points gained in such a way as to be clearly understood by others. Here the individual cameras come into the fullest play, with a proper motive and stimulus to make the most of what too often is considered a mere toy.

It is reserved for the camera club to transform many mere "button-pressers" into real amateur photographers. Our club, though small, has several vital interests. The fundamental one

is in the comparison of work done, and the exchange of suggestions and criticisms. Another is the helping one another to develop and print, and the school dark-room becomes an educational and social center of wide influence. The exchange of ideas and experience as to different kinds of plates, paper, etc., which are best for certain kinds of work, plays an important part in the club work. Then there is discussion of the physical and chemical laws underlying work with the camera; anything that will directly or indirectly help in exposing, developing, and printing is interesting and valuable. The camera outing should be the basis of much work, especially in the application of the principles of exposure, composition, etc., discussed in the meetings. When the child realizes, even to a very limited extent, that success in this line cannot be attained by the snap-at-everything method, but by careful, patient, orderly work, he has taken the first important step toward real success in all lines of work, and he receives a genuine feeling and respect for laws that might not be gained in any other way. The pupils find that this work helps in other school lines. In the art work it is of great assistance in the appreciation of beauty, and is especially valuable in gaining a realization of composition. The recognition of what is good composition in art never becomes so vital as when one is able to select from the infinite variety of objects about him some bit that is pleasing to the eye, and then transfers to the photograph the lines and groups in the form of his idea of composition. This reacts again by helping in the next photograph to improve on former efforts. This sharpening of the vision to a better appreciation of the beauties about one I consider the best fruit of the whole work. In chemistry and physics it helps to appreciate many chemical changes and physical laws as few lines of work can.

The social value of the work of the club may be an important factor in class spirit. The idea of helpfulness is fostered; appreciation of the right kinds of competition, and the taking and giving of suggestions and criticisms, are developed; while each gains the social idea of working for the benefit of the group.

All this work is still in its infancy. We feel it can reach



PILGRIM FESTIVAL; THE FIRST SINGING SCHOOL



A WOODPECKER'S HOME IN CENTRAL PARK

into many more lines of school activities. It may be of great help to the history work by representing historic places visited by some members of the grade and not available to the rest. It may serve also as a record of the history trips taken during the year. The photographs taken on various excursions may be made into stereopticon slides, which open up another field of usefulness. With the assistance of the projection apparatus it is often possible to use the print itself without the trouble of making a slide. In the laboratory micro-photographs of specimens may be made, enlarged, and also used as slides in the stereopticon. When the pupils are making books showing some line of English history, or geography work, the photograph makes an excellent mode of illustration.

It is often of great assistance to school people to study the equipment of various schools which they cannot visit, and the school camera lends itself admirably to this field of work. An increasing problem in school management is to provide interesting and profitable work for the pupil during the long summer vacation. The camera may be made a most efficient assistant, giving at the same time an attractive form of outdoor work, and a means of recording and sharing the summer's experiences with the others after school begins again. The opportunities here are innumerable—travel, recreation, participation in industrial life, etc.

While these experiences and suggestions are based upon conditions in this particular school, many of them may be applied to any school. There is no one but will find, if he attacks this problem with enthusiasm and patience, that the result of his work is improved, and the enjoyment and value to teachers and pupils greatly increased.